

Definitions of different music genres

A

A Cappella

Sung without instrumental accompaniment.

Acid House

House music featuring squelching loops from Roland TB-303 synthesizers.

Acid Jazz

Contrary to its name, this style has little in common with Acid House. Acid Jazz consists of various blends of Jazz, Funk, House and Hip-Hop.

Acoustic

Created without the use of electricity.

Ambient

Usually quieter than other styles, ambient music describes three dimensional atmospheres with sound, often without a beat.

Atmospheric

Genres that create an extraordinary emotional tone or quality.

B

Ballad

A narrative, sentimental poem set to music.

Big Beat

This genre features very thick, prominent beats (often breakbeats) with fun, energetic samples and a party atmosphere.

Blues

Growing out of spirituals and worksongs, Blues usually features simple chords and improvisation on vocals and instrumentation.

Breakbeat / Breaks

Any music that uses drum break samples from rock, soul or funk.

C

Classical

Relating to European music during the latter half of the 18th and the early 19th centuries.

Club / Dance

Any style of music with a danceable beat.

Contemporary

Music created similar to current styles.

Country

A very simple and traditional style, Country stems European folk music and other sources, and has since taken on other influences such as blues, rock, etc.

D

DanceHall (Ragamuffin)

A style of Reggae featuring faster synthetic drums and rapid sing/speak vocals.

Dirty

Genres with distorted samples or beats.

Deep (Deep Underground)

Often containing many elements of Dub, Deep music is the furthest from the mainstream, with relaxed, smooth and romantic characteristics.

Dub

This style accents percussion and bass, with sparse vocals, echo effects, and reverb on other instruments.

E

Electro

70s style funk performed with synthesizers.

Electronica

A term representing any style of music made with electronic equipment.

EuroDance / Hi-NRG

A variation of Disco that's simple, lightweight and catchy, with a faster tempo and fluffy, repetitive lyrics.

Experimental

A general term surrounding electronic music without predefined genres.

F

Filtered

An effect created by temporarily removing high or low frequencies.

Folk

A down-to-earth style focusing on universal truths, often with traditional acoustic instrumentation and a simple melody.

Funk

An effect created by building and releasing tension with the placement of notes and rhythms.

Fusion

At the time of its origin, Fusion was a blend of Jazz with the aggressive qualities of Rock. Today it can represent a blending of any two or more styles.

G

Gabber

This style is an extremely fast variety of 4/4 Dance music with tempos of over 200 BPM.

Goth

Music placing emphasis on dark, grotesque, gloomy atmospheres.

H

Happy Hardcore

An extremely fast variety of 4/4 dance music with 'happy' melodies and tempos of over 200 BPM.

Hard

Genres with faster, louder, pounding beats.

Hardcore

Genres displaying intense melodramatic loyalty to specific characteristics of a style.

Hip-Hop

Four elements make up Hip-Hop: The MC (Master of Ceremony), DJ, Breaks and Graffiti. Rhymes performed by the MC center around subjects relevant to daily life.

House

Named after its birthplace, the Warehouse, a club in Chicago, House is in many ways an electronic extension of Disco. House features a steady 4/4 beat, with accented percussion and basslines.

I

IDM (Intelligent Dance Music)

Sometimes called Brain-Dance, this style features extremely fast, complex rhythms in not only the percussion, but in every instrument used in the track.

Illbient

This style often combines elements of Dub, Hip-Hop and Drum 'n' Bass, with dark & eerie atmospheres.

Industrial

One of the earliest styles of dance music, most Industrial has Heavy Metal / Rock influences with a 4/4 beat. It often is dark and dehumanized, with samples from mechanical tools such as drills and saws.

Instrumental

Music without vocals.

Intelligent

Genres created for listening, often much more complex than dance floor counterparts.

J

Jungle / Drum 'n' Bass

Both styles display very fast tempos around 160-200 BPM, with double-speed breakbeats along strong basslines. According to leading DJs, Jungle conveys a party atmosphere with Reggae inspired bass, while Drum 'n' Bass is considered to be more intelligent listening music.

L

Latin

More of an umbrella style than a genre, Latin influenced music often has acoustic instruments and horns with many layers of percussion.

Lounge

This style refers to easy listening music made in the 50s and 60s from a blend of Swing and Big Band, but the modern representation of Lounge can be synonymous with Downtempo.

M

Metal

Heavy, distorted guitars with simple melodies and loud, brutal percussion.

Minimal

Music created with the lowest degree of instrumentation possible.

N

New Age

Music aimed at producing a sense of inner calm.

Noise

O

Old-Skool

A term for the 'original' sound of a genre before sub-genres appeared.

P

Progressive

Styles that have characteristics from being created by the latest of technology and technique in audio production.

Pop

Has a catchy melody and relatively simple rhythm.

Psychedelic / Trippy

Genres relating to hallucinations, distortions of perception, or altered states of awareness.

R

R&B (Rhythm & Blues)

As an extension of Blues, R&B steadies the beat and adds a concrete melody.

Rap (Toasting)

Speaking in time over a beat.

Retro

Music directly imitating styles of the past.

Rock (Rock & Roll)

Pure Rock has a strong beat and a catchy melody backed by three or four chords.

Roots

A term often applied to music closely related to the birth of a genre.

S

Smooth

Genres with a relatively constant tempo and volume.

Soft

Lush, inoffensive and smooth, often very commercial.

Soul

Music with an emphasis on performers expressing a high degree of emotion.

Symphonic

Genres containing sweeping symphonic textures.

T

Tech

Often very aggressive, associated genres sound very mechanical, like metal scraping on metal. Tech is often used to describe techno-influenced music that has too many organic qualities to be pure techno.

Techno

This term has come to have two popular interpretations, the first being a description of all electronic music. The second interpretation is a style that developed from House music, which completely abandoned the influences of Disco; Techno is more mechanical and less organic.

Trance

This style usually features a 4/4 beat with intense arpeggiated synthesizers along energetic build-ups & breakdowns.

Tribal

Genres utilizing tribal drum patterns.

Trip Hop

This genre is a variety of breakbeat usually featuring psychedelic atmospheres and female vocalists singing in a rock-influenced style.

U

US Garage

Named after NYC club the Paradise Garage, this style is very similar to Disco, mainly differing with deeper bass and more pronounced percussion.

UK Garage / 2 Step / Speed Garage

Pronounced 'gare-ridge' in the UK, it is similar to US Garage, adding influences from Jungle and R&B.

Underground / Alternative

Genres existing outside of pop culture.

Urban

A term given to R&B and Soul produced in the 80s and 90s.

W

World

Refers to music with heavy influences outside the traditions of the US and the UK.